

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 INRE-00
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 H-01 ICAE-00 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3424
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 2732
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PINT PA
SUBJECT: ARREST OF OPPOSITION LEADER DOMINGO LAINO

REF ASUNCION 2717

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT ARRESTED LEADING
OPPOSITION FIGURE, DR. DOMINGO LAINO, SHORTLY AFTER NOON JULY 7.
RELIABLE REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE VEHICLE IN WHICH LAINO WAS RIDING
WAS CUT OFF BY TWO UNMARKED POLICE VEHICLES ON A MAIN DOWNTOWN STREET
IN ASUNCION AT APPROXIMATELY 12:15 P.M. PLAINCLOTHES POLICE FORCIBLY
REMOVED LAINO FROM THE CAR AND FORCED HIM INTO AN UNMARKED CAR WHICH
THEN DROVE OFF. PLAINCLOTHES POLICE ENTERED THE CAR OF DR. JOSE
FRANCISCO DE VARGAS, IN WHICH LAINO HAD BEEN RIDING, AND APPARENTLY
ORDERED HIM TO DRIVE TO INVESTIGATIONS POLICE. DR. DE VARGAS IS A
DEFENSE LAWYER FOR THE INTER-FAITH CHURCH COMMITTEE TO AID POLITICAL
PRISONERS. NEAR THE POLICE BUILDING, DR. DE VARGAS SPOTTED A FRIEND
ON THE STREET AND WAS ABLE TO SAY THAT HE WAS BEING DETAINED AND
TO ADVISE THE INTER-FAITH CHURCH COMMITTEE. IN THE AFTERNOON,
MRS. LAINO SUBMITTED A "DENUNCIA" TO THE INVESTIGATIONS POLICE
THAT HER HUSBAND HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED. THE POLICE TOLD HER THAT
THEY KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE INCIDENT. IT BECAME MORE AND MORE
APPARENT AS TIME WENT ON THAT THE "KIDNAPPING" HAD BEEN DONE BY
THE POLICE AND AT MIDNIGHT, POLICE AUTHORITIES CONFIRMED TO THE
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PRESS THAT THEY WERE HOLDING LAINO FOR AN INVESTIGATION. PRESS
COVERAGE OF THE STORY HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. WE LEARNED OF THE KIDNAPPING WITHIN
TWENTY MINUTES OF ITS OCCURRENCE. EFFORTS DURING THE AFTERNOON
TO REACH THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERIOR PROVED
FRUITLESS. MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION CAME TO THE EMBASSY OR

TELEPHONED IN WITH VARIOUS REPORTS.

3. DURING THE AFTERNOON THE AMBASSADOR CALLED FOR A FEW MINUTES AT THE HOUSE OF LAINO'S MOTHER WHERE HIS WIFE, FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WERE GATHERED TO AWAIT NEWS. HE EXPRESSED PERSONAL SYMPATHY AND STATED THAT HE WAS INFORMING THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE CONCERN OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. THE PRESS WAS THERE AND MANAGED TO CATCH A PICTURE OF MRS. LAINO WITH THE AMBASSADOR.

4. CONTACT WAS FINALLY ESTABLISHED WITH THE GOVERNMENT LATE IN THE AFTERNOON. BOTH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER PAPPALARDO INITIALLY INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS MATTER. LATER THE FOREIGN MINISTER CALLED BACK WITHIN AN HOUR TO INFORM US THAT THE POLICE HAD LAINO UNDER ARREST. HE DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF DE VARGAS. THAT SAME EVENING NOGUES INFORMED ME THAT LAINO WOULD BE RELEASED SUNDAY, JULY 11.

5. WE HAVE RECEIVED NEW INFORMATION, HOWEVER, THAT INDICATES LAINO MAY BE HELD FOR TRIAL UNDER LAW 209 IN CONNECTION WITH THE SO-CALLED "NATIONAL FRONT CASE OF 1974" IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE FEBRERISTA PARTY WERE TRIED AND SOME CONVICTED FOR POLITICAL CONSPIRACY. LAINO WAS IMMUNE AT THE TIME BECAUSE HE HELD ELECTIVE OFFICE AS A NATIONAL DEPUTY. (A COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF THE CASE CAN BE FOUND IN THE STAPHANSKY REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.)
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6. COMMENT: I WILL WAIT THROUGH THE WEEKEND TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WOULD AFFECT ANY RECOMMENDATIONS I MAY MAKE. HOWEVER, IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RELEASE LAINO TOMORROW AS PROMISED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER, I BELIEVE WE MUST REACT. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT ANY GOVERNMENT COULD COMMIT SUCH A SERIES OF BLUNDERS. FORCIBLE ABDUCTION, DENIAL OF RESPONSIBILITY, SHAMEFACED ADMISSION OF GUILT AND NOW THE THREAT OF A POLITICAL TRIAL. IT'S ENOUGH TO GIVE KIDNAPPING A BAD NAME.
WHITE

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Message Attributes

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